

An Overview of Tibetan History, Part 4:

Khoshut Khanate and the integration into the Chinese

Qing Dynasty

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In 1642, after Güshi Khan defeated the kingdoms, he made the 5th Dalai Lama to be the ruler of Tibet and installed the Ganden Phodrang regime. In return, the Dalai Lama gave him the blessings and made him the formal ruler of Tibet as **Khoshut Khanate**, which existed from 1642 to 1717. Although Güshi Khan was now the overlord of Tibet, he stayed uninvolved concerning practical politics. The strong ties between the Dalai Lama and the Mongolian Khans go back to the fraternization between Altan Khan and the 4th Dalai Lama, who was a Mongol himself. Therefore, the Dalai Lama and the Mongolians worked now hand in hand. As the worldly leaders were overthrown now in Central Tibet, the religious leaders played the main influence in Wü-Zang. The 5th Dalai Lama built up the Potala Palace in Lhasa to reign from there. As the youngest of all Buddhist schools, the Gelug school, now was empowered, other schools were suppressed and Nyingma monks fled to Bhutan after the Dalai Lama regime was installed in 1642, since Nyingma is the only Tibetan Buddhist school that does not belong to the “new transmission” (also called “new translation”), but instead belongs to the “old transmission”. Therefore a Joint Tibetan-Mongolian invasion of Bhutan took place, and rivals of the Bhutanese king Ngawang Namgyal supported the invasion. However, they were defeated by the Bhutanese forces in the lowlands of southern Bhutan ¹.

To avoid a break off territories in Bhutan, the death of Ngawang Namgyal in 1651 was kept secret for 54 years ².

In 1644, the Qing Dynasty was established in China. This dynasty was not a Han-Chinese one, but a Manchurian. The Chinese emperor Kangxi invaded Taiwan, since Ming-loyal forces stayed there. To secure the border with Tibet, he ordered to invade Garzê. The 5th Dalai Lama died in 1682, but the Tibetans kept it secret to the Chinese until 1697. The 6th Dalai Lama was an ethnic Monpa from Tawang. The Monpa were always discriminated by the Tibetans, since they claimed their own principalities in Southern Tibet and Bhutan. The 6th Dalai Lama was said to live a very worldly life, enjoying alcohol and women. His luxury life was financed at the expense of the people, of course, which led to heavy dissatisfaction by the people as well

as the regent of the Khoshut Khanate, who was in fear of riots. There are several theories that the Chinese emperor and **Lhasang Khan** (also spelled Lha-bzang Khan) made a deal to kill the Dalai Lama. In 1706, the 6th Dalai Lama **Cangyang Gyamco** (ཚངས་དབྱངས་རྒྱ་མཚོ། , tshangs-dbyangs rgya-mtsho), sometimes spelled Tsangyang Gyatso, was kidnapped in Qinghai and killed later. In 1707, the 25-year old Ngawang Yeshey Gyatso was announced to be the true 6th Dalai Lama by Lhasang Khan. It is believed that it was Lhasang Khan's own son. While the religious leaders denied this choice, the Chinese emperor Kangxi supported the point of view of Lhasang Khan. However, Lhasang Khan was probably not too satisfied with the Chinese emperor, as he sent a supervisor to Tibet in 1709 to collect information, but was recalled in 1711. Lhasang Khan had a high understanding of Buddhism, and sponsored a lot of monasteries. This way, he could expand his own power. As his power became stronger, his rivals wanted to get rid off him and there is the rumor that they sent a letter to the Dzungar Khanate in Mongolia with the request to overthrow Lhasang Khan. However, several sources nowadays claim that this is untrue.

Anyways, in 1717, the Dzungars were coming under order of **Tsewangrabtán**. He needed Tibet and thus he wanted to enthrone a puppy government to be strong enough to isolate the trade lines of the Chinese Qing empire. With the help of Tibetans, the Dzungars would be able to attack the Qing from two fronts³. Interestingly, the Dzungars and Khoshuts had strong ties and Tsewangrabtán was married to Lhasang's sister⁴. And Lhasang's son in return should marry Tsewangrabtán's daughter. Lhasang's son, arriving in Dzungaria, was captured, imprisoned and executed. It is unclear why the Dzungars turned against the Khoshuts. An explanation for this behavior might be the fear of the Dzungars that the Khoshuts could warn the Chinese.

When the Dzungars arrived in 1717, they killed Lhasang Khan. This coup came by surprise, since the Dzungar army did not come through Kōkōnur (Qinghai), but from the north-west. Kangxi appointed **Kelsang Gyatso** (བསྐལ་བཟང་རྒྱ་མཚོ། , bskal bzang rgya mtsho), a king from Lithang kingdom in Chinese-supervised Kham, to be the 7th Dalai Lama. The Tibetans supported this choice, being in fear of the Dzungars and asked the Chinese emperor to invade Kōkōnur. Kangxi invaded Qinghai and Tibet and defeated the Dzungars in 1720. In the same year, the 7th Dalai Lama was enthroned in the Potala Palace in Lhasa, probably under Chinese protection. The Chinese army left Tibet, but consolidated power over Amdo and Kham until 1725^{5 6}. The nobility in Lhasa was still allied with the Dzungars and therefore against the Qing dynasty, while the Tibetan government and his highest officials were allied with the Qing dynasty which led to a new rivalry. In 1724, the Chinese started to establish a permanent

presence to protect the ruler **Polhaney**, in 1728 Tibet was fully integrated into the Qing dynasty in accordance with the ruling elite. In return, the ruling elite under Polhaney was granted autonomy, so the only connection between Tibet and China, was an amban (a commissioner from China who represented the Chinese interests in Tibet). From now on, Tibet was formally in China. For both, the Tibetans and the Chinese, it was a win-win situation. The Chinese protected the Tibetans from invasions and fragmentation, thus leading to a migration of Chinese to Tibet, and the Tibetan ruler could still rule the land himself. The integration of Tibet into the Qing dynasty is a very important event, since Tibet belongs to China from that time until today.

Notes:

1. West, Barbara A.: Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Asia and Oceania, New York 2008, pp. 107-110
2. Worden, Robert L.; Savada, Andrea Matles (ed.): Nepal and Bhutan – Country Studies (3rd ed.): Chapter 6 - Bhutan: Administrative Integration and Conflict with Tibet, 1651–1728, 1991, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/bttoc.html>, retrieved on 26 July 2015
3. Barfield, Thomas J.: The Perilous Frontier – Nomadic Empires and China, 221 BC to AD 1757, Oxford 1992, p. 289
4. Adle, Chahryar; Habib, Irfan: History of Civilizations of Central Asia, Volume 5: Development in Contrast – From the Sixteenth to the Mid-nineteenth Century, Paris 2003, p. 180
5. According to other sources, Amdo was put under control in 1724, while Eastern Kham was fully integrated into China in 1728, for more information see: Wang Jiawei; Nyima Gyaincain: The Historical Status of China's Tibet, 2000
6. Parts of Qinghai were in fact controlled by Lobsang Danjin (ལོ་བཟང་བསྟན་འཛིན་, blo bzang bstan 'dzin; 罗卜藏丹津) after he rebelled against the Qing in 1723 to revive the Khoshut Khanate, but failed in 1724